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**FOUNDATION
OF THE
PRESENTATION CONGREGATION
IN
NEWFOUNDLAND**

by

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**1975
Bi-Centenary
of the
Founding of the Congregation
of the
Sisters of the Presentation
in
Cork, Ireland**

After a year of preparation, the eight religious in the parent house in Cove Lane made profession of Solemn Vows in the presence of Bishop Moylan on August 15, 1806. A similar ceremony took place on the same day in the other five Presentation convents then established.

For an understanding of subsequent developments regarding the canonical status of the Presentation Sisters, I quote Walsh:

Since 1805 there have been important changes in the legal terminology and canonical practice relating to institutes such as the Presentation Sisters. The terms "solemn vows" and "religious order" are no longer used. The brief of Pius VII permitted solemn vows but did not enjoin the strict religious cloister enforced by the Council of Trent. The irreligious effects of the French Revolution were a major factor in the gradual change of canonical practice. . . . The enclosure prescribed for the Presentation Sisters in 1805 was interpreted in practice as *clausura episcopalis*. The vows of the Presentation Sisters are no longer solemn. During the 19th century the vows of institutes without strict enclosure were recognized as simple. Up to 1879 records of profession in the Motherhouse in Cork always referred to solemn vows; after that date the nature of the vows was not specified. The uncertainty was removed by the constitution *Conditae a Christo* on December 8, 1900. Congregations with simple vows were "real religious" and the Ordinary was entrusted with the care of the enclosure. Further evidence of the changed juridical status was contained in the decree *Perpensis* on May 3, 1902 which indicated that the vows of the Presentation Sisters were simple. In response to a query by Cardinal Logue, Archbishop of Armagh, the Sacred Congregation for Religious replied on August 23, 1910, "that the vows of the Presentation Sisters of Ireland were not solemn but simple."¹⁹ The exact status of the Presentation Sisters was clarified in the code of Canon Law in 1918. The enclosure is *clausura communis*; responsibility for its observance and dispensation devolves on the Ordinary. The Sisters are *sorores*, and form a *congregatio juris pontificii*.²⁰

The First Foreign Foundation — Newfoundland

Newfoundland was the first foreign mission — established in 1833 from Galway where a Presentation Convent had been founded in 1815. The preceding pages may seem somewhat detailed, seeing that the topic of this paper situates us specifically in Newfoundland, but in order to get a true appreciation of the strange ways of God's providence in selecting religious men and women to carry on the great work of spreading His Name, it is perhaps necessary to go deeply into the past in order to get events in the right perspective in the present. If the Ursulines had been able to fulfil Nano Nagle's wishes regarding the education of the poor children of Cork, it is not probable that she would have considered founding another religious institute. She was thus "God's unwitting instrument for effecting the introduction into Ireland of two religious orders instead of one as she had originally intended."²¹

Religious and Educational Situation in Newfoundland in the 18th and 19th Centuries:

When by the treaty of Utrecht in 1713 the Island of Newfoundland came under British rule, a large number of the inhabitants were French and Irish Catholics. Most of the former left the island, while the Irish who remained there experienced the full force of religious intolerance. In 1784 Father James O'Donel, a Franciscan Friar, was named Prefect-Apostolic in response to a request from the Catholics of St. John's that an Irish priest be sent to them. In 1795 he was made first Vicar-Apostolic of Newfoundland and some years later the island of Anticosti and the seaboard of Labrador were added to his territory. Because of the scarcity of priests, a great indifference to religion had taken hold of the inhabitants of the island. Through the zeal of Dr. O'Donel and his immediate successors, Bishop Lambert (1807-1817), and Bishop Scallon (1816-1830), religion had made some progress before the end of the first quarter of the 19th century, but there was still much ignorance and superstition to be coped with. It was Bishop Michael Anthony Fleming (1830-1850) — also a Franciscan — who gave such an impetus to religion and to Catholic education in the island that whatever success attended future efforts can be traced back to his initiative. He was appointed Vicar-Apostolic of Newfoundland and Bishop of Carpasia *In partibus* in 1829, the year in which the British Emancipation Act recognized the rights of Catholics. Following his appointment, his first work was to procure priests from the Old World. His objective was to establish a pastor in every place where one could be supported. After he had obtained sixteen priests and had placed them in various parts of the island, he was convinced that the next essential step was to establish a religious order in Newfoundland and to ensure a Catholic education for the Catholic children. Let us now look briefly at the educational picture existing in Newfoundland at this time.

The first recorded attempts to provide any public education for the settlers in Newfoundland were made by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, the Society for Improving the Condition of the Poor in St. John's, the Benevolent Irish Society, and the Newfoundland School Society. The first-named society, founded in England during the reign of James I, spread to the New World in 1705. This society goes on record as having established the very first known school in Newfoundland at Bonavista in 1723. A group of Franciscans, under the jurisdiction of Monseigneur de St. Vallier, had established a convent at Placentia during the French occupation there toward the end of the 17th century, but whether or not they carried on educational work is not clear. In 1744, the Gospel Society established a school in St. John's, and by 1824 they had organized schools in twenty settlements throughout the island. The records state that at times only two or three of these schools were actually in operation because of the difficulty of securing teachers. In 1843, this society discontinued educational work and from then on devoted

its efforts solely to missionary work for the Anglican Church.

The Society for Improving the Condition of the Poor in St. John's was founded in 1803 and its first effort was to collect funds for the establishment of two schools, one Protestant and the other Catholic. Evidently the plan to operate according to religious denomination did not succeed, as we learn from the following statement made by Bishop Fleming in a letter to Very Rev. John Spratt, Dublin:

The St. John's Charity School was maintained partly by government and partly by subscriptions of all classes of the community, without distinction of class or creed. To this institution the Protestant minister subscribed as well as the Catholic priest; and the Catholic merchant as well as the governor. To this I myself have contributed very largely in proportion to my means; and, yet, never was there a wish expressed to place a Catholic master or mistress over the institution.²²

In later years the St. John's Charity School amalgamated with the Newfoundland School Society founded in 1823 by an English merchant, Samuel Codner, whose chief aim was "to communicate free instruction to the poor inhabitants of all denominations in this colony."²³ Between 1823 and 1840, this society had established over forty schools in the island. Its contribution to education in the founding of schools and the training of teachers continued for exactly a century. Its educational activities in Newfoundland ended in 1923 at which time it passed its buildings over to the Church of England.

In 1823, the Benevolent Irish Society, founded as a non-denominational body in 1806 by a group of St. John's citizens mostly Protestant, turned its attention to the work of education. Its first step was to establish an Orphan Asylum for the Irish where about two hundred boys and girls were registered. This institution was really regarded as Roman Catholic as most of the pupils were Catholic. However, religious instruction was forbidden. When during his early years in St. John's as curate to Bishop Scallan, Father Fleming once sought admission to this school to give religious instruction, he was refused entrance by a small group of Catholic "liberals". As soon as he was appointed co-adjutor to Dr. Scallan, he again turned his attention to this school and, in spite of much opposition, he prepared four hundred children for their first holy Communion. Gradually the opposition died down and these schools were placed under his supervision. Bishop Howley says: "It appears that from the time that Dr. Fleming got control of them, they became exclusively Catholic in their tone and management."²⁴ In 1847, Dr. Fleming brought in a branch of the Franciscan Brothers from Galway who took charge of these schools until 1853 when they again passed into the hands of secular teachers until taken over by the Irish Christian Brothers in 1876.

The schools referred to above may be called "public" in order to distinguish them from the "private" schools of the time which

provided some education for those who were able to pay a few pounds a year for the service. The first private school to be advertized in *The Gazette*, October, 1807, was operated by a Mr. L. Chancey who charged the younger pupils 10s 6d a quarter and the older ones 15s a quarter besides the "customary allowance for fuel."²⁵ In the same year, the Newfoundland Seminary was established by a Mr. P. Philips where the pupils were taught the essentials of an English education and the pre-requisites of a classical education.

It was from a private school, the Newfoundland Seminary, founded in 1807 in St. John's that we have the record of the first public examination held in Newfoundland. It took place in the Court House on June 7th of that year.²⁶

Bishop Fleming Brings Presentation Sisters to Newfoundland

In 1833 Bishop Fleming went to Ireland for the purpose of visiting the Presentation Convent in Galway which seemed to him to be the most likely place to obtain volunteers for his mission, as the superior of the convent there — Mother John Power — was a native of Waterford with which place many of the Irish in Newfoundland had ties of relationship and friendship. On June 29, he approached Mother John with his request for Sisters, telling her of the conditions in his territory, of his great concern for the children in his charge, and of the urgent need for religious Sisters who would train the youth of the island to become truly Christian, so that these would in turn train others. When Mother John placed his request before the assembled community, the response was immediate. Sister Magdalen O'Shaughnessy was the first volunteer for the New World, followed after a few moments by her close friend Sister Xaverius Lynch, just a few months professed. Then Sister Mary Bernard Kirwan, bursar of the Galway community, made a third volunteer; then there was a fourth — Sister Mary Xavier Maloney — who was then fifty-one years old.

Bishop Fleming, filled with gratitude, sincerely thanked Mother John and the four Sisters and he immediately went to seek the consent of Dr. Brown, the Bishop of Galway. Naturally, Bishop Brown was very surprised and he expressed great concern for the welfare of those Sisters who had volunteered. However, he gave his consent and his blessing to this new venture. Preparations for their departure began. The four volunteers made their eight-day retreat which normally took place during the summer holidays, and Dr. Fleming began to make arrangements for passage to Newfoundland. Some years earlier, Bishop Scallan had bequeathed to Bishop Fleming £1,500 for his mission, and this amount he now appropriated to the Newfoundland foundation with a guarantee of another hundred pounds annually for the support of the Sisters, and with the promise that in due time he would build a suitable convent and school for them. Mother Power and her advisers agreed to these terms but made the stipulation that the Galway community would be empowered

to recall the Sisters after six years of service if they wished to return.

Arrival in St. John's, Newfoundland

On August 12, 1833, the four Sisters left Galway for Waterford from where on August 28 they, accompanied by the Bishop, embarked on the brig "Ariel". After a voyage of twenty-five days on the ocean, they arrived in St. John's harbour on September 21. An excerpt from the newspaper "Newfoundlander" has the following editorial:

Arrival of Right Reverend Dr. Fleming: On Saturday morning, September 21, this respected Prelate arrived in the brig "Ariel" after a short passage from Waterford. On the previous day, the brig "Cabinet" arrived from Waterford with five clergymen for this mission; both vessels were released from quarantine at the same time... At twelve o'clock His Lordship and the Religious Ladies landed and were received amidst the most vehement and enthusiastic cheering. Dr. Carson politely provided his carriage for the Nuns in which they were conveyed to the Episcopal residence.²⁷

In the newspaper just mentioned, there is another item as follows:

The Ladies, who in their zeal for Religion have expatriated themselves from their native country, are of the Presentation Order of Nuns — a society whose lives are entirely devoted to the imparting to children of the humbler classes in society useful education combined with religious instruction. Their names including those assumed by them upon taking the Veil are as follows:²⁸

The names of the four Sisters are then listed as already given in this paper. Thus did the first Presentation Sisters set foot on the soil of the New World. A section of the Bishop's residence had been set aside for them where they lived for a month.

In letters to Mother John Power dated September 22, 1833, the day following their arrival in St. John's, the Sisters gave detailed accounts of their voyage of over three weeks, of the storms encountered, of the sea-sickness suffered, and finally of their arrival in St. John's on the feast of St. Matthew. To quote from one of Sister Magdalen's letters:

We arrived on the 21st of September, the feast of St. Matthew. All the population of the town flocked down to the wharves, and climbed up the masts of the vessels to see us and to welcome us; and some of the principal inhabitants came on board, vying with each other for the honor of rowing us ashore. We were not allowed to disembark until they had made a new landing stair. The best carriage in the town was sent to fetch us.²⁹

These letters got mislaid in Liverpool, and no account of their arrival in Newfoundland was received at the convent in

Galway for four months. The community gave them up as lost. Solemn requiem Masses were celebrated for them, copies of their vows were burned, and a period of mourning was observed in the convent in Galway.

Opening of the First Presentation School in Newfoundland

Within a month after their arrival, the Sisters took up their abode in a residence which had been renovated for them. It had formerly been a tavern with the name of "The Rising Sun", a name which the townsfolk considered to be a propitious omen, symbolizing the light of faith and education which they came to diffuse throughout the country.³⁰ On October 21, they opened their first school where 450 children were waiting to be admitted. Archbishop Howley says that "never was there witnessed in St. John's a scene of deeper interest than the opening of the Presentation schools."³¹ In reporting this event, a local newspaper — edited by a Protestant — carried the following editorial:

Seldom has it been our lot to witness a scene of such deep interest. . . . whether we regard the community of ladies surrendering all the joys of life for the advancement of the glory of Him to whom they have consecrated their lives, or the little applicant for admission, . . . or the multitudinous feelings of the estimable Prelate to whose exertions we owe this blessing. There he stood, witnessing the completion of his dearest wishes.³²

The accommodations which this building afforded were insufficient for such a large enrollment, and notwithstanding the fact that the Sisters reserved for themselves only two bedrooms and a parlor which served as chapel, common room, and refectory, they could not house the ever-increasing numbers. Although Dr. Fleming had rented this place for one year, he immediately set about procuring a larger building. He rented a house which formerly had been the residence of the Anglican archdeacon of St. John's and fitted it up as a convent. On December 8 of the same year, the Sisters moved into it, and there they remained for nine years, giving the locality the name "Nunnery Hill" — a name which it bears to this day. The Bishop then undertook the building of a large convent and school on Long's Hill. In August 1843, not wishing to renew the lease on the house on Nunnery Hill, Bishop Fleming arranged for the Sisters to move to a house which had been a ball-alley, situated a little outside the town. In December 1844 they took possession of the beautiful new convent on Long's Hill, just completed at a cost of £4,000.

In the meantime, two postulants had joined the original four — Catherine Phelan from New Ross, County Wexford, and Amelia Shanley from Dublin. They entered the convent in St. John's in 1842, were professed in 1846, and both died in 1889. Their religious names were respectively Sister Mary Ignatius and Sister Mary Antonia. But six Sisters could not cope with the daily attendance of over 1,000 pupils, even though these Sisters were trained to work with large numbers. So once again Bishop

Fleming made an appeal to the Galway convent for volunteers for the Newfoundland mission. In placing his petition before the Rt. Rev. Dr. O'Donnell, Bishop of Galway, Dr. Fleming made the following statement:

Until last year their school was seldom less than 1,200 and their average daily attendance was 900, but this was owing to the insufficiency of accommodation in their school-rooms. But during the last year, as they had removed to a new convent that I had erected for them, they were compelled to be content with teaching as many as can be assembled in a few rooms and the basement hall of their home. I am engaged now in the erection of an extensive school-house to correspond with the dwelling-house, and as, by the census taken last year, the population of St. John's exceeds 20,000, I have made arrangements for the accommodation of 1,600 children at least; but as the labor of instructing so many will be far more than could be expected, or ought to be required of the few professed religious we have, and as I have little hope of obtaining assistance here, I have prayed Your Lordship to interest yourself in our behalf . . . I have every hope that by strengthening the force of the Presentation Convent we shall lay a sure foundation for the permanent instruction of all.³³

The appeal was successful and two more Sisters from the Galway community volunteered. They were Sister M. Josephine French, Superior of the Galway community, and Sister Mary de Sales Lovelock, Novice Mistress.

On June 9, 1846, when the greater part of the city of St. John's was destroyed by fire, the new convent and school were burned. Bishop Fleming was still in Ireland and when he received the tragic news, he offered to release from their promise the two Sisters who had recently volunteered for his mission and who were then actually at Liverpool awaiting passage to St. John's. But in spite of the news of the destruction caused by the fire and Bishop Fleming's offer to release them, they were determined to persevere in their decision to join their Sisters in St. John's, now in dire distress. The latter, now homeless, had taken refuge in the Bishop's small country cottage about a mile outside the town. The Sisters of Mercy had invited them to remain with them until a house could be provided, but they did not wish to give them trouble. Also, many of the townspeople had offered to take them into their homes but the Sisters refused all offers as they were living a somewhat cloistered life since the approval of their rules and constitutions in 1805. They remained at the Bishop's cottage during the next five months, teaching the children on fine days in the open fields, and in rough weather in the stables and barns. It is said that when Dr. Fleming arrived in St. John's and beheld the complete destruction of the city and saw the new convent and school reduced to ashes, he never fully recovered from the shock. Certainly from that time on, his health began to decline. In November he arranged for the Sisters to live in a part of the Mercy Convent and he erected a temporary school for them nearby. Here they remained for five years.

Bishop Fleming was not easily cast down by trials, and he immediately began to make plans for the building of a new Presentation convent and school. But unforeseen circumstances together with his protracted illness and subsequent death delayed rebuilding until 1850. When Bishop Fleming realized that his health was failing, he requested that the Rev. John T. Mullock of the Franciscan Order would be appointed his coadjutor. Dr. Mullock was consecrated on December 27, 1847, in Rome where he remained during the winter. On April 23, 1848, he took passage for Newfoundland and arrived in St. John's on May 6th. On July 14, 1850, Bishop Fleming died in his 58th year. The following excerpt regarding the death of this great Prelate is taken from the personal diary of Bishop Mullock:

At twenty minutes past ten this night, July 14th, Dr. Fleming departed this life, having received the sacraments of the Church. He was in his 58th year, was born in Carrick-on-Suir in Ireland, professed in the Order of St. Francis in the Convent at Wexford, was made coadjutor to Dr. Scallan in 1829, succeeded as Vicar-Apostolic and Bishop of Carpasia in 1830. He founded two convents of nuns, established chapels and schools over the whole diocese, and built the Cathedral of St. John's. He was made first Bishop of Newfoundland, it being erected into a diocese in 1847. R.I.P.³⁴

New Presentation Convent and School

On August 23, 1850, Bishop Mullock laid the foundation of a new Presentation convent and school on a beautiful site close to the Cathedral. On October 21, 1851 — the anniversary of the opening of their first school eighteen years previously — the Sisters moved from the Mercy convent and took up their abode in a portion of the unfinished new school. On July 2, 1853, they took formal possession of their new convent and school erected at a cost of £7,000. This convent is now the Motherhouse of the Presentation Congregation in Newfoundland. This was the eighth house they had occupied since their arrival in 1833. At that time, there were nine professed religious in the community in St. John's, twenty in outlying places, and several novices and postulants. There is a memo dated 1855 in Bishop Mullock's handwriting which states:

In the diocese of Newfoundland at the present 30 priests, John T. Mullock, Bishop, 5 Presentation Convents, 1 Convent of the Sisters of Mercy, Catholics about 65,000 or 70,000, Chapels 62. St. John's, 1855.³⁵

Spread of the Presentation Congregation Throughout Newfoundland

By this time new branches of the Order had been founded outside St. John's, the first of these having been established in the town of Harbour Grace when on July 1, 1851, Bishop Mullock, accompanied by Mother Magdalen O'Shaughnessy — Superior of the convent in St. John's — conducted the Sisters to Harbour Grace. The members of this new foundation were: Sister M.

Xaverius Lynch (Superior), Sister M. de Sales Lovelock, Sister M. Josephine French, and Miss Mary Flynn — a postulant from Galway. They arrived at Harbour Grace by boat from Portugal Cove and were given a great welcome by the Pastor, his assistants, and the townspeople. In his address to the Irish Society Bishop Mullock requested its members "to be attentive to the community he had just brought for the benefit of their children and future generations."³⁶ On the following Monday, July 7, they opened their first school. In addition to pupils of regular school age, girls of twenty years of age and over joyfully availed themselves of this opportunity for education, both religious and secular. The Sisters also conducted Sunday school classes for both children and adults. All the women of the town assembled on Sundays for religious instruction, and girls who could not attend school on week days were taught reading and writing at these Sunday classes.

On January 31, 1852, Bishop Mullock again visited Harbour Grace, this time to receive Miss Mary Flynn into the congregation as Sister Mary Catherine. The ceremony took place on February 2 and crowds of people assembled to witness the event, some coming several miles on foot. This was the first time outside St. John's that a Sister had received the religious habit. The old wooden chapel could not accommodate the large number of people, and many climbed up to the windows on the outside in an effort to see something of the ceremony.

The next foundation was made at Carbonear when at the request of Bishop Mullock and through the influence of Captain Hanrahan — the first member of that district to be elected under Responsible Government — a grant was obtained for the founding of this convent. In addition to this, the sum of £700 was contributed by the Catholics of that parish. On June 2, 1852, Bishop Mullock accompanied to Carbonear Sister M. Ignatius Phelan (Superior), Sister M. Antonia Shanley, Sister M. Veronica Collins — the first native nun to persevere in the Presentation Congregation — and three postulants. Then followed foundations at Harbour Main and at Fermeuse, both in 1853. In the last-named place, Mother M. Bernard Kirwan, one of the four foundresses and the first superior of the Presentation convent in St. John's, was appointed by Bishop Mullock the superior of this new foundation. She died at Fermeuse on October 27, 1857, and is buried there. Later, this community was transferred to Renew, a nearby settlement in the same parish. During the next decade, six foundations were made, one in St. John's West and the others in nearby settlements in the diocese of St. John's.

The first foundation of Presentation Sisters in what is today known as the diocese of St. George's was made in 1872 when five zealous Sisters ventured to the south coast of the island to establish a convent at Harbour Breton. Here, success crowned their efforts, but due to economic reasons, there was a gradual decline in the Catholic population. Because of this, on August 12, 1894, the Harbour Breton community was moved to St. Jacques

which was at that time a flourishing settlement under the jurisdiction of Bishop Mullock. When the diocese of St. George's was erected in 1904, St. Jacques was included in the boundaries of that diocese. In the 1930's because of a world-wide economic depression, numerous families were forced to leave their hometowns on the south coast to seek a livelihood elsewhere. In 1943, forty-nine years after its establishment, the convent was closed, and the Sisters living there at that time returned to the Motherhouse. However, more prosperous times having come to Harbour Breton in recent years, another foundation was opened there in 1970.

In 1925, the first foundation of the Presentation Congregation in West Newfoundland was made at Stephenville, under the ecclesiastical authority of Most Rev. H. T. Renouf, Bishop of St. George's. A community of four Sisters was assigned to this house which was formally opened on November 21, the titular feast of the Presentation Congregation. They conducted classes in a small two-room school where ninety-nine pupils were registered. Here they taught until 1930 when a new and more spacious building was erected. Since that time, the town of Stephenville has grown tremendously, and today the total enrollment in the Catholic schools from Kindergarten through Grade XI is 2,251 pupils. The present school staff comprises six Sisters and 107 lay teachers. In 1927, the Presentation Sisters were requested to found a convent at Corner Brook and to take over the schools there. Today, there are ten houses of the Presentation Congregation in the diocese of St. George's with a total of 54 Sisters.

In 1933, a foundation was made in the town of Grand Falls and this was followed by other foundations in that area. Today, there are nine Presentation Convents in the diocese of Grand Falls, with a total of sixty Sisters.

In all, there are now thirty-four houses in the island together with a House of Prayer set up in St. John's in 1972, and a Renewal Centre established at Grand Falls during the past year.

Amalgamation of Houses in Newfoundland

The year 1916 marks a milestone in the history of the Presentation Congregation in Newfoundland. Prior to this, the houses had functioned as units in their respective localities, and each community took its own subjects for formation before they were formally received, and later professed as members of that house. There was no transferring from one house to another. Wherever a candidate entered, she remained during her religious life. The Bishops of Newfoundland, which was now divided into three dioceses, had gradually come to the realization that during the span of time that the Sisters had laboured in the cause of religion and education, not the least of the obstacles to progress was the lack of united and concentrated action without which it is very difficult for a group to achieve its full potential. The existence of a number of small communities, each independent of

the others, rendered adequate formation of the novices and young professed almost impossible, and the establishment of a central novitiate was now seen to be a matter of urgent necessity.

After lengthy discussion among the Bishops, the Superiors, and the Sisters in each house, a petition setting forth the reasons for requesting amalgamation of the houses in Newfoundland was forwarded by the Bishops of the island to the Sacred Congregation in Rome. The petition stressed the points that amalgamation of the houses would promote greater efficiency in the work of the institute, would provide centralized training for the novices and postulants, and would ensure greater spiritual advantages for the members. Moreover, the institute could be more effectively governed by a Mother General assisted by her council than under the system of independent houses. A general effect of the proposed change would be to give all the professed Sisters a voice in the administration of the affairs of the institute through their elected representatives.

The Sacred Congregation graciously acceded to the request in a decree of November 25, 1915, which was transmitted to the Bishops of Newfoundland through the Apostolic Delegation at Ottawa on April 7, 1916. This decree solemnly and formally, by the authority of the Sovereign Pontiff, united all the houses in Newfoundland under one Mother General. As a consequence, many changes and modifications had now to be made in the rules and constitutions, which work, the decree enjoined, was to be taken up as soon as possible by the Mother General and her council under the supervision of the Bishops. Meanwhile, the decree stated, there was to be no change in the rules except in so far as changes would be necessary to give effect to the decree.³⁷ Thus, jurisdiction in practically all the affairs of the congregation passed from the hands of the Bishops into the hands of the Mother General and Council.

The decree stated that for the first three-year term, the Mother General, the members of the Council, and the other officials, namely, the Bursar-general, the Secretary-general, and the Mistress of Novices were to be named by the Apostolic Delegate after consultation with the Bishops of the island. At the end of three years, a general chapter would be held in which these officials would be elected. At the parent house in St. John's, the novitiate was canonically set up. Five postulants who had entered at various places in 1915 were the first to be received as novices into the central novitiate on June 29, 1916. Four of these are still living. Three novices, who had received the religious habit a few months before the decree of amalgamation was promulgated, joined the five newly-received, and the eight novices were professed on October 13, 1917. On October 13, 1916, the first temporary vows made in the congregation were pronounced by seven novices who had completed their novitiate at the time of amalgamation. Three of these are still living. Four of those who had made perpetual vows at the time of amalgamation are living.

The statistical table below shows the numbers as of December 31, 1916, then twenty-five years later, and then every ten years up to the present. The numbers given for 1975 are as of April 30 of this year:

YEAR	NUMBER WITH PERPETUAL VOWS	NUMBER WITH TEMPORARY VOWS	NUMBER OF NOVICES	NUMBER OF POSTULANTS
1916	99	7	8	—
1941	155	22	17	10
1951	193	26	15	10
1961	249	55	54	14
1971	298	35	5	1
1975	276	11	—	—

Rules and Constitutions of the Presentation Congregation

When the pioneers of the Newfoundland foundation came to the island, they were observing the rule approved by His Holiness Pope Pius VII in 1805.³⁸ Accompanying the Constitutions were a "Directory",³⁹ and a "Ceremonial".⁴⁰ The last-named contained the various ceremonies and the practices of devotion.

In order to revise the Constitutions according to the directives of the decree of amalgamation of 1916, and according to the code of Canon Law of 1918, the Presentation Sisters on November 4, 1934, sent a petition to the Sacred Congregation for Religious requesting that they be permitted to model their constitutions on those of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Archdiocese of Melbourne, approved by His Holiness Pope Pius XI on March 13, 1932. On December 3, 1934, this permission was granted by a decree from the Sacred Congregation for Religious. In the meantime, the Presentation Sisters in Cork had revised the Rules and Constitutions of 1805 and this revision had been approved by the Holy See on December 23, 1927.⁴¹ Since 1928, the Sisters in Newfoundland had been using the Rule approved for the Sisters in Cork. Following the decree of 1934, they used the Melbourne Sisters' Rule until 1958 when the newly-revised constitutions of the Presentation Sisters of Newfoundland were approved by the Holy See.⁴² After Vatican Council II, the Special General Chapter of 1968 updated these constitutions of 1958 and issued a set of directives which were further revised and updated by the General Chapter of 1973. At the close of the last-mentioned Chapter, a post-capitular commission was elected to revise the Constitutions of 1958. A tentative draft of the new Constitutions is being prepared for presentation to a Chapter of Affairs scheduled for the summer of 1976.

Specific Contribution to Education

Although throughout these pages, I have many times referred to the work in education carried on by the Sisters from the very first month of their arrival in 1833, yet this paper would

not be complete without some mention of their specific involvement in the educational life of the island.

By the time representative local government was set up in Newfoundland in 1833 and the first Education Act was placed before the House of Assembly in 1836, the denominational system of education was recognized by all, and the various denominations were in a position to ask for government aid for their schools. The first petition for aid to education was presented by the inhabitants of the town of Harbour Grace for aid to their Free School founded in 1826. A committee was set up to study the matter with the result that several schools benefited from this request, as the statement below shows:

Resolved that it is the opinion of this committee that towards the support of the said free schools the sum of three hundred pounds per annum should be granted to the Newfoundland and British North American School Society in aid of their schools in the several districts in this Island — the sum of one hundred pounds per annum in aid of the St. Patrick's Free school at Harbour Grace — and the sum of one hundred pounds per annum in aid of the Presentation Convent School at St. John's, and that the said several sums be granted for the period of five years.⁴³

This was the first government aid received by the Roman Catholic schools. Up to this time, the Presentation Convent School had been maintained solely by Bishop Fleming. In 1838, an amendment to the 1836 Act added £150 for textbooks, to be divided and distributed by "His Excellency the Governor among the several boards of education who may approve the same."⁴⁴ The Act of 1836 was certainly not favourable to denominational education. It stipulated that no religious instruction was to be imparted by any minister of religion, and that no boards were to select any textbooks that would inculcate the doctrines of any religious body. Indeed, there was much controversy over denominational education during those decades. In spite of all opposition, Bishop Mullock continued fearlessly to promote Catholic education for Catholic children. Without the aid of the religious congregations, it is probable that he would not have succeeded in saving the denominational system. The Education Act of 1843 made the first provision for legislative aid to each denomination, thus showing some recognition of the system. A grant of £5,100 was distributed "one part in the support of schools appropriated to the instruction of the children of members of the several Protestant Churches, and the remaining part in the support of schools appropriated to the instruction of members of the Roman Catholic Church."⁴⁵ Furthermore, the Act of 1874 set out a definite denominational system of education which has continued down to the present.

In the area of Teacher Training, the Presentation Sisters played an important part during the first decades after their arrival. The early teachers brought into Newfoundland by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel had a good classical

education but no professional training. Later, the teachers brought in by the Newfoundland School Society had been trained in the Central National School in Baldwin's Gardens, England according to a system which aimed to prepare teachers to instruct large groups of pupils with the assistance of monitors or older and more advanced pupils. It was through using the techniques of this system that the first four Sisters were able to manage so successfully the large enrollment in their school in St. John's. The efforts of the Newfoundland School Society and of the Methodists to establish training centres for teachers in the island are worthy of mention, especially when we find that there was not as yet any support for teacher-training. The first contribution from the government for this purpose was made by the Act of 1853. In this Act no reference is made to the training of Roman Catholic teachers, for which Dr. Rowe gives the following explanation:

... much of the Catholic teaching was being done by members of the religious orders, the majority of whom were well trained in Ireland before coming out to Newfoundland. ... later the convents undertook to train female teachers for Roman Catholic schools, although the actual date when this work started is not clear. From statements made by Bishop Mullock and others, it is likely that it started very soon after the establishment of the Orders in Newfoundland.⁴⁶

The following excerpts from REPORT UPON THE INSPECTION OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS FOR THE YEAR 1862 signed by Michael John Kelly — one of the first school inspectors in the island — support the statement that the Presentation Sisters were at that time training female lay teachers:

... The Lamaline school is closed, and will continue so until a school house is erected there, when a trained teacher from the Presentation Convent, St. John's, will take charge of it.⁴⁷

And speaking of the District of Placentia West, the inspector reports:

I found the schools in this district progressing favorably. Two trained female teachers from the Presentation Convent, St. John's, had charge of two of the schools, namely — Presque and Mersheen, and were conducting them very satisfactorily.⁴⁸

In 1864, a questionnaire was sent to all school boards in Newfoundland requesting their comments regarding the training of teachers for the schools in the island. Bishop Mullock, replying as Chairman of the Roman Catholic School Board for St. John's, expressed satisfaction with the progress being made. An excerpt from his reply is given below:

Our training system for teachers is as good as I have found in any country I am acquainted with. The teachers have all the advantages of the College School, and the mental training and discipline after school hours necessary to qualify them for the future position. ... The Nuns train free of expense any number of

female teachers who present themselves, and we generally send teachers to the outports from the St. John's convent schools.⁴⁹

The Act of 1892 recognized the following institutions as qualified to undertake the training of teachers:

The Roman Catholic College (males), Presentation Convent (females), Church of England College, Central Training School of the Newfoundland School Society, Methodist College, General Protestant College, and the Congregational Training School.⁵⁰

Between 1892 and 1916, there were several acts and amendments none of which effected much change regarding teachers. The Act of 1916 stipulated that nine-tenths of all grants to boards had to be paid out in teachers' salaries. In 1920, an amendment to the 1916 Act created the first Department of Education in Newfoundland which made possible a certain amount of integration among the various boards but within a denominational framework. By this Act, the first Normal School for teachers was set up. The religious congregations continued to be recognized centres for the training of their own teaching personnel. In recent years, the Presentation Sisters discontinued this phase of their work, and their prospective teaching Sisters attended St. Bride's College, Littledale, an affiliate of the Memorial University of Newfoundland. At this university college, the Sisters did the first two years of a four-year program which they completed at Memorial University or at a university outside the Province.

At the present time, fifty-three Sisters are engaged in high school, seventy-four in elementary and primary schools, twenty-three teach music (full-time), and three teach business education. One Sister is on the faculty of education at the Memorial University of Newfoundland, two are consultants with the provincial department of education, and six Sisters are consultants in various fields at school board level.

Conclusion

It is one hundred and forty-two years since those brave Sisters from the Galway community volunteered their assistance in the cause of religion and Catholic education in Newfoundland. It is difficult, in fact well-nigh impossible, to evaluate the work and the contribution to the Church made by any religious Order. The historian may attempt to reconstruct the pattern traced out through generations past and may even endeavour to predict the ways of the future, but only the Divine Master can appraise the true value of the undertakings and accomplishments of any individual or group. From a study of the history of the Church in Canada, as elsewhere, it is clear that God seems to endow founders and foundresses with souls of tempered steel, for no setbacks ever daunt them or turn them from their noble purposes.

The oak tree is the emblem of the Presentation Congregation, and as new trees spring from acorns that fall from the

parent tree, so have new foundations of the Presentation Congregation sprung up in all the English-speaking countries of the world.

Today, the spiritual daughters of Nano Nagle are continuing her work and doing it, hopefully, in her spirit. What she began alone and unaided, thousands of hands are doing today. Her dream of world-service was expressed by herself during her lifetime when she said: "If I could be of any service in saving souls in any part of the globe, I would willingly do all in my power."⁵¹ May her followers be ever mindful of these words of His Holiness Pope Paul VI:

The Council rightly insists on the obligation of religious to be faithful to the spirit of their founders, to their evangelical intentions, and to the example of their sanctity. In this it finds one of the principles for the present renewal and one of the most secure criteria for judging what each institute should undertake.⁵²